

APPENDIX (Amended Material)

1. Apparatus comprising:

a sterilization tunnel for surrounding a plurality of containers with pressurized gas; and
a plurality of zones within the sterilization tunnel having different sterilant concentration levels [introduced] therein wherein the sterilant concentration levels in the plurality of zones are maintained at [vary by at least] a ratio of [.1 ppm / .5 ppm] at least about 5 to 1.

3. Apparatus comprising:

a sterilization tunnel for surrounding a plurality of containers with pressurized gas;

a sterilant supply source to supply sterilant into the sterilization tunnel;

a control system, operatively attached to a plurality of sterilant concentration zones within the sterilization tunnel, for automatically adjusting the operational parameters of the tunnel, wherein the sterilant concentration levels in the plurality of sterilant concentration zones are maintained at [vary by at least] a ratio of [.1 ppm / .5 ppm] at least about 5 to 1;

at least one gas supply source to supply the pressurized gas into the sterilization tunnel; and

at least one gas exit to allow the pressurized gas to escape the sterilization tunnel.

17. Apparatus comprising:

a sterilization tunnel for surrounding a plurality of containers with pressurized

gas;

a sterilant supply source to supply sterilant into the sterilization tunnel;

a plurality of zones having a plurality of gas nozzles within the sterilization tunnel;

at least one partition forming a plurality of sterilant concentration zones within the sterilization tunnel wherein the sterilant concentration levels of the plurality of sterilant concentration zones are maintained at [vary by at least] a ratio of [.1 ppm / .5 ppm] at least about 5 to 1;

at least one gas supply source to supply the pressurized gas into the sterilization tunnel; and

at least one gas exit to allow the pressurized gas to escape the sterilization tunnel.

33. A method comprising:

providing a sterilization tunnel for surrounding a plurality of containers with pressurized gas;

introducing sterilant from a sterilant supply source into the sterilization tunnel;

providing a plurality of sterilant concentration zones within the sterilization tunnel wherein the sterilant concentration levels of the plurality of sterilant concentration zones are maintained at [vary by at least] a ratio of [.1 ppm / .5 ppm] at least about 5 to 1;

providing at least one partition for forming said sterilant concentration zones;

setting the level of sterilant concentration by a control system;

introducing pressurized gas from at least one gas supply source into the

sterilization tunnel; and

allowing the pressurized gas to escape the sterilization tunnel.

38. Apparatus comprising:

means for providing a plurality of containers in a sterilization tunnel;

means for providing a plurality of sterilant concentration zones within the sterilization tunnel wherein the sterilant concentration levels of the plurality of sterilant concentration zones are maintained at [vary by at least] a ratio of [.1 ppm / .5 ppm] at least about 5 to 1; and

means for providing a plurality of gas flow rates within the sterilization tunnel.

39. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the sterilant concentration levels of the plurality of sterilant concentration zones are maintained at [vary by at least] a ratio of [.1 ppm / 1000 ppm] at least about 1,000 ppm to .1 ppm.